



## ALONG THE TRAIL

### *ACA Executive Vice President Billy Powell*

#### **Convention was a huge success**

To say this year's weather has been a bit unusual may be an understatement. But to have folks near the Gulf Coast and across south Alabama unable to attend the Cattlemen's Convention in

Huntsville because of the snow, well that speaks for itself. My son Matt and wife Lindsay would think that with offices and schools being closed and people staying home because of 4 inches of the white stuff is a stretch. You see they live in Washington DC which received the most snow on record, slightly over three feet. Now that is cause to stay home!

Anyway, if you did not make it to Huntsville, you missed an outstanding convention and super trade show. Hats are off to Ed Whatley and all of the allied industry friends for helping make the convention a huge success. The Gubernatorial Forum was a real highlight with seven candidates for Governor on stage giving their positions on important issues and responding to question of interest to cattle producers. Democratic candidates Artur Davis and Ron Sparks joined with five Republicans – Robert Bentley, Bradley Byrne, Tim James, Kay Ivey and James Potts for the Forum. We really appreciate each of these folks making the effort to participate. Several members who have attended over thirty conventions stated that this was the best program ever!

A big thank you goes to the folks who have purchased the "Cowboy" tag for their cars and pickups. Funds from these tags have contributed over \$179,150 to help 161 outstanding young people across the state to attend college. This year 21 new names were added to the list as 19 "Tagged for Greatness" scholarships, one Veterinarian student scholarship and one Alabama Horse Council scholarship were presented at the state convention.

#### **New Officer Team Elected**

One of the strengths of the ACA over the years has been the strong group of leaders that volunteer their talents and time to the association. And the 2010 officers are no exception. The three state officers, Mike, Leo and Donna Jo, are fulltime cattle producers working everyday on the farm raising cattle. The four new regional vice presidents have a wide array of experience both in the business world and in producing cattle. The collective years of experience in the state's cattle industry that these leaders have will be valuable in shaping the future direction for your association and making decisions on the numerous issues facing our industry. We look forward to working with this new team.

As we travel across the state attending numerous county annual meetings, we get to observe a wide level of participation. Some meetings attract 400 folks for a nice steak dinner while others seem pleased to have 40 folks attend. One of the challenges we face as an organization is to continue to develop leadership on the county level. Several of our county chapters seem to have fallen

off in getting in members, having good attendance at their county meetings and attracting the next generation of leaders. One of the first items discussed in the Strategic Planning session last month was how to help provide leadership training to the county chapters. From experience, active chapters are those with a number of well planned member involved activities during the year. You will hear more about ways to accomplish this in the future issues of the magazine.

I do know that with the increasing number of complex and important issues facing our industry, we must improve our membership numbers and look for ways to increase revenue if we are to remain a strong and viable organization. We are not the only ones in the debate about production agriculture today. There are those who are well organized, highly energized and well funded working against us and our way of life. Now, more than any other time in our history, we have to be vigilant and true to course to protect our business climate and way of life. Strong county chapters are the answer.

#### **SLE Week Underway**

As you read this issue of the *Alabama Cattleman* the 53rd Southeastern Livestock Exposition week will be well underway. The partnership between the SLE and ACA is well documented and has served our association well. With the help of the SLE, the ACA has one of the finest headquarter buildings in the nation and puts on a major livestock week generating tons of positive publicity for our organization. However, the greatest reward is the thousands of young people who have been given a venue to exhibit their livestock, receive recognition for their hard work and opportunity to learn character building traits to grow into better citizens.

#### **AU Meat Science Program needs Support**

This may well be viewed as a biased opinion since I have been directly involved with the Meat Science program at Auburn University since my graduate school days, but the program is not getting the support it deserves from Comer Hall. In the mid-1980's there were four positions. Dr. Bill Jones retired as the Meat Extension specialist five or so years ago and his position has not been filled. Now Dr. Chris Kerth – Associate Professor of Meat Science - has accepted a job offer from Texas A & M and I've been told that with the budget restrains that this position will not be filled. Dr. Wayne Greene has worked hard to get this position filled as it is critical to his teaching program.

And this comes at a time when Alabama cattle producers are facing the greatest opportunity ever to finish cattle within the state as the demand for farm raised, grass-fed, organic, all natural, locally grown beef is at an all time high. Also the Animal Science undergraduate program is busting at the seams and the graduate program is the strongest in years. To top it off, we have been able to get some extra dollars from the Alabama Legislature thanks to our friend Representative Richard Lindsay's leadership for meat science research. Something is wrong with this picture.